

Madness and Creativity: Unravelling the Mystery through Case Studies of Popular Artists

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Both madness and creativity are reoccurring themes in psychology. History is replete with examples of artists who achieved fame and also suffered from psychopathology. For a long time now, psychologists have been intrigued by the link between madness and creativity. Are creative people more likely to have psychopathology? Or is it that the people with psychopathology have greater propensity towards creativity? The present paper attempts to answer these questions with help of multiple case analysis of four popular artists namely Sadat Hassan Manto, Sylvia Plath, Adolf Hitler and Eminem based on pertinent secondary data sources. The paper discusses the major themes that emerge from the analysis of life history and creative works of these artists to examine if there exists an overlap between the two. The analysis clearly indicates that the difficult life experiences, especially during the formative years, is an underlying factor that fuels creativity and also precipitates psychopathology. Further, the lived experience of psychopathology may itself makes a person feel like a stranger in the world of 'normalcy' and the artists may find creative channels for expressing their otherwise inexplicable pain and desires.

Key Words: madness, creativity, psychopathology, artists, case-study

Introduction

The images of a mad artist, a depressed poet and a tormented musician have never failed at capturing the imagination of people. Tracing the curiosity into the subject of 'madness' and 'creativity' back to ancient Greeks, it may be noted that Aristotle once said '*Omnes ingeniosos melancholicos esse*', which means that no great mind has ever existed without a touch of madness (Becker, 2014). Socrates also believed that some of the highest goods have come to us by way of madness. He examined the idea further and delineated four types of divine madness, each corresponding to a different God. Prophetic madness corresponding to Apollo, the madness of mystery corresponding to Dionysus, poetic madness corresponding to the Muses, and the madness of love corresponding to Eros and Aphrodite. The Greek physician Hippocrates speculated that madness resulted from an imbalance of four bodily humours: blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm. Each humour was believed to be endowed with a certain quality such as heat, cold, dryness, and moistness. If the humours and the corresponding qualities were properly balanced, the person was deemed healthy (Swindall, 2010).

To examine the issue at hand empirically, Martindale (1972) studied lives and work of 21 English poets (born between 1670 and 1809) and 21 French poets (born between 1770 and 1909). These forty-two poets were same as the ones who were

selected for a series of content analytical studies that culminated in publication of a classic titled '*Clockwork muse*' (1975). Taking advantage of collection of these biographical materials, Martindale decided to gauge the mental health of the poets at three levels: normal, symptomatic (when behaviour displayed alcoholism, suicide, phobias, or mental "crises" or "breakdowns") and psychotic (if they were committed to an asylum or exhibited recurring symptoms such as hallucinations). It was found that about 15 percent of the poets had psychotic episodes at some point in their lives, and a significant 50 percent had some type of psychopathological symptoms. The study made it clear that the prevalence rate of psychopathology among poets was significantly higher as compared to the normal population. If we were to go beyond the artists to explore creativity among scientists, decades prior to Martindale's work poets, Judas (1949) examined 181 scientists and 113 artists (including architects, sculptors, painters, poets, and composers) from Germany. The findings of the study revealed that the rate of psychopathology among scientists was far less than among the artists, and even among the artists, poets fared the worst in terms of mental health.

One of the most notable large-scale efforts to study the link between madness and creativity has been made by James Kaufman (2001). Based on his examination of 1,629 eminent creative writers, Kauffman concluded that the writers in general and poets in particular, have extraordinarily high rates of

mental illness and an enhanced risk of committing suicide when compared with the regular population. He found that the percentage of suicide is 26 percent among the sampled poets and 14 percent among the sampled writers as compared to 1 percent rate of suicide among the non-literary public. Kaufman called his findings, “The Plath Effect” in memory of Sylvia Plath-the famous writer, who after a long stint with depression, committed suicide in 1963.

Another empirical study by Carson et al. (2003) threw light on the subject further. Carson and her colleagues reported a positive correlation between high levels of creativity and abnormal behaviour. Thus, one may speculate that creative people do in fact face a heightened risk of developing some kind of mental illness. It was noted in the study that they are much more likely to be diagnosed with mood disorders are likely to have greater propensity for developing substance abuse disorders. Carson and her colleagues posited that the artists diagnosed with mood disorders are able to effectively channelize their creativity in the mania phase of bipolar mood disorder. The state of hypomania fosters creativity as it gives rise to mental clarity and the subsequent rise in activation of associated networks.

At the neuro-psychological level, the connection between creativity and psycho-pathology is seemingly possible. A comprehensive review of past studies exploring the link between madness and creativity has revealed that there are neurological similarities between the creative mind and the mind plagued with psychopathology (Sussman, 2007). There is unusual activity in the frontal lobe (especially, prefrontal cortex) of people suffering from bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. The hyperactivity in this area is known to make a person to draw connections between two unrelated ideas. This ability may be at the core of creativity as well.

Moving beyond the prevalence rates towards uncovering the dynamics of relationship between madness and creativity in lives of eminent figures, Swindall (2010) investigated the personal lives and creative works of six eminent writers, namely Gustav Flaubert, Hector Berlioz, Friedrich Nietzsche, Rainer Maria Rilke, Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath with a psycho-historical focus. Through his extensive analysis, Swindall reported that in case of the mad artist, one’s life and creative work tends to be inexorably intertwined. They all had in one way or another, difficulty distinguishing between the reality and the myth that they were creating through their writings. He also concluded that the states of madness do provide inspiration to the creative person. The

artists often use their work as a sort of biographical mirror to reflect on their life experiences.

This area of research, like any other, is also not without difference of opinions among researchers. Many researchers do not accept the linkage between madness and creativity and believe to be an outcome of popular imagination without any empirical evidence. These researchers in support of their position critique the robustness of the researches discussed earlier. For e.g., Waddell (1998) did a comprehensive review of 29 studies and 34 review articles establishing a link between creativity and mental illness. Based on his scrutiny, he reported that most of these studies could not be trusted as they had a flawed methodology with weaker case study designs and no cohort study. Schlesinger (2009) also argued that most of these past researches used case histories of very atypical individuals and thus, findings may not be generalizable to a larger population. Another criticism comes from the manner in which the key concepts of ‘madness’ and ‘creativity’ have been defined in these studies. These definitions are diverse and inconsistent and thus, synthesizing their findings is all the more challenging.

Given the elusiveness of the term ‘madness’, deconstructing it becomes extremely important not only in reference to these studies, but in general academic discourse as well. In his classical work *‘Madness and Civilization’*, Michael Foucault (1988) posited that madness is not merely a biological condition, it is a socio-culturally created lived experience. He convincingly argued that ‘mad’ is a label given by society to those who refuse to conform and thus, are difficult to control. This critical take on the idea of madness is also shared by Thomas Szasz. In his influential essay titled ‘The Myth of Mental Illness’ (1960, p.113-118), Szasz noted that “mental illness, of course, is not literally a “thing” or physical object and hence it can “exist” only in the same sort of way in which other theoretical concepts exist.” Thus, going a step further, Szasz raised a controversial question: does mental illness or madness exist at all? For him, it does not as so called ‘managing’ madness is like witch-hunting where society tries to rationalize strange behaviour of people by attributing it wrongfully to an abstract theoretical concept of mental illness that does not actually exist. It is all a mechanism to control ‘deviance’ in society to bring in homogeneity and control.

Keeping in view these ideas and thus, adopting a person-centric approach in reference to the link between madness and creativity, Peterson (1986) in his study titled ‘A mad people’s history of madness’

noted that the complexity of the nature of madness and the critique of its idea can't be dismissed. The term 'madness' has had different connotations in different socio-historic and cultural contexts. It is a subjective experience that is lived differently by different people. Thus, one of the ways of unravelling the mystery of madness will be acknowledging the lived experiences of people who have experienced this 'so called' madness. The present study is intended to be one small step in that direction.

The Present Study

This investigation was carried out by the sixth semester students of the Department as part of the paper on Understanding Psychological Disorders. To discern the linkage between madness and creativity, the specific research objectives delineated in the present study were:

- To examine the life history of the eminent person to uncover the lived experiences of psychopathology
- To relate the life experiences with the creative works to identify the autobiographical reflections of psychopathology

Method

To understand the relationship between 'madness' and 'creativity', this research employed a multiple case study approach. The cases selected for the purpose of analysis included the noted creative figures who have experienced psychopathology. The cases were chosen by the students based on their personal interest.

The data for the present study was collected using secondary sources such as autobiographies, biographies, interviews, creative works like stories, poems, speeches, art works etc. The secondary data thus obtained was analyzed using the six steps of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Results and Discussion

This section focusses on the analysis and discussion of the four cases studied extensively by the students as follows:

- **Saadat Hasan Manto** by Ana Gupta & Andree
- **Sylvia Plath** by Kanika Mohan & Kriti Trehan
- **Adolf Hitler** by Ria Dayal

- **Eminem** by Poorva Parashar

Apart from offering a very interesting reading, each case serves the purpose of furthering the academic discourse on the theme of madness and creativity.

Case 1: Saadat Hasan Manto

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"Saadat has died but Manto lives on..."

Saadat Hasan Manto is a well-known Urdu author known for his many short stories and radio plays. He was both revered and despised for his bold writings and was tried for obscenity several times. He was deeply affected by the partition of India and Pakistan and wrote many stories on the subject. The latter part of his life was particularly poignant where he underwent depression and also became dependent on alcohol. The present work offers a glimpse into his professional and personal life and his simultaneous experiences of depression and alcoholism based on his biography titled '*Pity of Partition*' by Ayesha Jalal (2013). Two of his short stories- 'The Insult' and 'Ten Rupees'-are chosen as a sample of his creative work to draw a parallel with his life experiences.

About Manto: A brief biographical sketch

Saadat Hasan Manto was born on May 11, 1912 in the city of Ludhiana, Punjab. His family migrated from Kashmir to Punjab in the early 19th century and settled in Amritsar. He often used to say that being beautiful is the second meaning of being Kashmiri. Manto's childhood was not an easy one. His father, Ghulam Hasan, was an orthodox Muslim and a trained lawyer. He married twice as his first wife was known to be mentally unstable. Manto was his only son from his second wife. Manto's mother, Sardar Begum, married Ghulam Hasan at the age of 21 after her first marriage was never consummated. Unlike his father who was cold and disapproving, Manto's mother was warm, caring and supportive. Thus, as a child, Manto occupied two very different emotional worlds with each of his parents.

It is interesting to note that the great writer Manto could not perform well in academics at school.

In fact, he failed thrice in school-leaving examinations. After barely passing in the fourth attempt, Manto entered the Hindu Sabha College in Amritsar in 1931, but dropped out a year later after failing the annual examinations. A few years later, a turning point came in Manto's life when he met Abdul Bari Alig who became his mentor. He was an editor of the Amritsar newspaper named 'Equality'. Under his guidance, Manto translated various Russian plays and short stories which were later published in 1933. One may say that Bari Sahib sparked the light of thinking and writing in Manto and he was the first positive male role model in Manto's life. Subsequently, in 1934, Manto made a second attempt at higher education by entering the prestigious Aligarh Muslim University, but, this attempt also did not last long as he was inaccurately diagnosed with tuberculosis. Thus, Manto retrieved to the mountains for sake of his health. Later in 1935, Manto returned to Amritsar only to find out that the financial condition of his mother was terrible and he would now have to support himself.

A new chapter in Manto's life began when he moved to Bombay in 1936 at the age of 24. These times were later recounted by Manto as the most enjoyable and unforgettable years of his life. In Bombay, to begin with, he worked as an editor of the weekly film newspaper 'The Painter'. At the same time, he also wrote stories and radio plays and published his first full collection of short stories titled 'Sparks' and 'Short Stories'. He also wrote the dialogue and script for the 1935 film 'Village Girl'.

All this while, Manto's mother longed to see him married and got him engaged to Safiya in 1938. Manto and Safiya got married on April 26, 1939. The couple lived happily until grief struck them at the loss of their new born son in 1941. A year later, Manto left for Delhi as he had accepted a job at the All India Radio. This again was short lived as Manto was not satisfied and he returned to Bombay.

The next event in his life, the partition, was of significance to all the people in the subcontinent. It was at midnight of August 15, 1947 when India became independent and Pakistan came into being. Safiya went to Lahore with their three daughters and Manto chose to stay in Bombay. His incentive for staying back was the opportunity to work with the famous actor Ashok Kumar to help him revive Bombay Talkies. Unfortunately, Kumar accepted Ismat Chughtai's short story over Manto's work for this purpose later. Manto couldn't get over this blow and decided to leave Bombay and set sail for Pakistan. He returned to Lahore on January 8, 1948. Being in

Pakistan, he felt an acute sense of dislocation and last few years of his life were consumed by the alcoholism, depression and nostalgia of life in Bombay. The money from his short stories was spent on alcohol. In April 1952, Manto entered rehabilitation to manage his alcoholism, but, it was not helpful. Finally, his distress led to his tragic death on January 18, 1955.

Manto's life and his creative works: An interface

Manto's biography titled "The Pity of Partition: Manto's Life, Times, and Work across the India-Pakistan Divide" (2013) written by Ayesha Jalal, Professor of History at Tufts University, who is the great grandniece of Saadat Hasan Manto. Gives an insight into how his life experiences found reflection in his creative writing. The significant themes that emerge through this reading are as follows:

Manto's relationship with significant others

Manto's relationship with his family members shaped him to be the kind of person he was. Maulvi Ghulam Hasan, Manto's father, was a strict disciplinarian and had very high expectations from his sons to follow in his footsteps and become successful lawyers like him. While Manto's step-brothers fulfilled their father's dream, Manto was not interested in law. This may be the reason that Manto's father was cold and distant. There was clearly a **lack of unconditional positive regard** in their relationship. In a particular episode in his childhood, once while flying a kite instead of studying, when he heard his father approaching, he jumped off the roof in panic hurting himself badly. Thus, **fear** dominated Manto's feelings towards his father. At another instance, Manto's father invaded the informal drama club he had formed with his friends and broke the musical instruments they were using. He made it clear that he considered these activities to be a waste of time. Manto was restricted in a lot of ways which later gave way to his **rebellion**. Unable to bear his father's pressure any longer, Manto decided to drop the science subjects in school to take up Persian and Urdu. He had a clear affinity for languages which would prove to be the reason for his success and fame later in life. But his father did not understand and appreciate it and he did not care anymore.

Manto's father's coldness was offset by his mother's **warmth**. His mother, Sardar Begum, gave birth to four children, of whom only Saadat and his sister Nasira Iqbal survived. Manto was very attached to his mother whom he called Bibijan. They used to live separately in a small section of the house. The contempt shown by the paternal side of the family for his mother left a deep emotional scar. He resented the

differential treatment meted out to his mother. Manto's spirits were lifted by his mother's keen appreciation of his early stories and unflinching belief in his impending success. When he was in Bombay, his mother wrote a series of letters to boost his morale. She read his stories with rapt attention. Manto's sister, whom he called Balaji, also reinforced Manto's penchant for storytelling. Manto clearly thought well of his sister's understanding of literature and sought her approval on every aspect of his literary works. The relationship between the brother and sister was tested when his sister got married and moved away. Manto wrote an emotional letter to his sister wherein he wrote, "*Balaji, your brother may be uncultured, worthless, and peevish, but he possesses a sensitive heart filled with love, a love that is hidden but which makes the smallest oversight seem like a major event*" (Jalal, 2013, p.48). This reveals a special strong bond between the siblings.

Manto got married to Safiya, who like him belonged to a Kashmiri family. She enriched Manto with rare insights into the female psyche. He published many stories dedicated to Safiya, which indicated his love for his wife. They had a son whom they named Arif, but his sudden demise made Safiya sick and pushed Manto into depression. This loss was tremendous for Manto, he wrote, "*I fainted only three times in my life; the first on my marriage, second on my mother's sudden death and then on the death of my son*" (Jalal, 2013, p.108).

Manto the writer: sensitive, revolutionary and champion for social justice

Manto drew inspiration for his creations from his life. Manto's characters in his short stories are very elaborative and true reflections of the world and its people. He was very **observant** and had a keen insight into the complexity of the human psyche. Ayesha Jalal, noted that Manto was "*someone who liked to keep his ear close to the ground in order to weave tales out of facts gleaned from everyday life*" (Jalal, 2013, p.23). Manto, from an early age, showed signs of being **sensitive** to the spectrum of human emotions. The portrayal of these emotions come alive in the diverse range of characters in his stories.

Manto wanted to inspire people to **fight for independence** through his stories. Right from the beginning, Manto was an avid reader of revolutionary literature. Bristling with anti-British sentiments, yet being skeptical of the Congress and Muslim League leadership, he was inspired by revolutionary ideas of Bhagat Singh. One of his friends Abu Saeed said, "*Manto had all the qualities of being a Bhagat*

Singh." (Jalal, 2013, p.41). Like Bhagat Singh, Manto too fantasized about driving the British out of India. His short story, '*Inqilab Pasand*' written in 1935 was a semiautobiographical sketch about the injustices, hypocrisies and lies that shaped his perception of the world.

Manto's characters were actual people faced with real life issues. Whether he was writing about prostitutes, pimps, or criminals, Manto wanted to impress on his readers that these so called disreputable people were also human, much more so than those who hide themselves under the thick veil of hypocrisy. He was very empathetic towards the socially downtrodden and brought out their inherent goodness. Manto's stories emphasized on **justice for all**. "*Jaib Kutra*" (Pick-pocket) was one of his radio plays where he wrote about a good-hearted expert pick-pocket, Kashi, who falls in love with a school teacher, Bimala, whose bag he had stolen. Through his stories, Manto conveyed that the social forces produce criminals, who, despite transgressing the norms, are human like anyone else and therefore susceptible to the reforming powers of love. Manto believed in the goodness of human nature and blamed society for pushing people into degrading themselves by becoming criminals and prostitutes.

Manto also wrote extensively about prostitutes. Some of these stories are '*Kali Shalwar*', '*The Insult*', '*Ten Rupees*' and the classic '*Thanda Gosht*'. Due to the his bold writings, Manto was tried for obscenity several times. "*I am not a pornographer but a story writer*" (Jalal, 2013, p.109) he declared in his defence several times. He even said, "*If one could talk about temples and mosques, then why could one not talk about whorehouses from where many people went to temples and mosques?*" (Jalal, 2013, p.71). One may say that Manto was quite ahead of his times in believing that a prostitute was not different from any other "honourable or respectable woman" and believed in her calibre of becoming anything she wants to. He questioned, "*Aren't prostitutes who don't cheat anyone also respectable?*" (Jalal, 2013, p.71). In that sense, Manto's writings had clear-cut **feminist** leanings.

Manto had high opinions of his self and his literary talent. He was **arrogant** and much ahead of his times, which made it difficult for him to get along well with others. Manto felt that the society was very unfair to his writings and him but he was too proud to complain or act as a victim. Being a **rebel**, he did not appeal for any kind of support and had a **hatred for victimhood**. The same is reflected in the characters he portrayed in his stories.

Pain of Partition

Manto's sensitivity and empathy also made him experience the pain of partition all the more poignantly. Desolation of partition inspired many of his stories. "*The tumult wrought by the partition of the country made a rebel out of me and I remain one,*" (Jalal, 2013, p.133). Manto disclosed. His "1919 Ki Baat" (A Story of 1919), written after partition, underlines his belief in the interconnectedness of events that preceded the brutal segregation of the subcontinent. Partition in this view was an intimate aspect of the inner dynamics of India's history. Manto was not interested in analysing the causes of partition but was keen on delineating its consequences. Unlike many other authors, Manto wrote partition related stories that did not pass judgment on events or human actions but sought to tease out their inwardness. Manto wrote on the plight of abducted women revealing the heinous face of humanity during the times of war. In his story "*Khol Do*" (Open it), he wrote about a Muslim girl, Sakina, who was separated from her father and was later sexually abused by the same men who were supposed to take care of her safety.

In one of his internationally known partition stories, "*Toba Tek Singh*" is about a non-muslim patient at a mental asylum in Lahore awaiting relocation to India. He was considered mad for questioning the wisdom of partition and the sheer brutality it had let loose. Blending hard facts with realistic fiction, Manto was able to document the multifaceted nature of human sufferings at the time of partition. According to Manto, the pity of partition was not that instead of one country there were now two- independent India and independent Pakistan, but the fact that "*human beings in both countries were slaves, slaves of bigotry..... slaves of religious passions, slaves of animal instincts and barbarity.*" (Jalal, 2013, p.137).

Living through the same pain at a personal level, he found it exceedingly difficult to stay on in Bombay in an atmosphere poisoned by killings, arson and rape. While he was working in Bombay Talkies, friction between Hindu and Muslim employees hurt him deeply. He was disappointed at being marginalised for being a Muslim. Manto himself was torn apart and could not decide if his home was India or Pakistan. Soon, he decided to move to Lahore, Pakistan. Disillusioned with the lack of opportunities in his newly adopted country, Manto turned to heavy drinking.

Alcoholism and depression

Manto slipped into severe alcoholism and depression in the last few years of his life. During his adult years, Manto had taken to whiskey as it helped him relieve acute chest pain when he was sick. With respect to alcohol, he confessed, "*I have started drinking a lot, not so that I can write- I cannot write when I have been drinking, but actually to find that something within me that I have to do*" (Jalal, 2013, p.72). Later, his under-appreciation at the professional front led him to drinking. He borrowed money from his friends which he was unable to pay back. He could not provide for his family. On one occasion, after a bout of excessive drinking, he was admitted to the hospital with symptoms of acute jaundice, but, the condition was later found to be cirrhosis of the liver. Manto admitted that the word 'abstinence' did not exist in his dictionary. "*I have sacrificed three quarters of my life to the lack of abstinence.*" He believed that "*if life is spent in abstinence, it is prison, and if one spends it intemperately, it is also a prison*" (Jalal, 2013, p.74). His self- destruction was aided and abetted by his friends who piled him with liquor. He grew extremely weak and felt tired of the daily recriminations about his lack of responsibility toward his family. He voluntarily gave his wife the rights to all his writings so that he could no longer borrow anything from the publisher without her prior approval. Such an existence tantamount to a living death for him and soon after he left his body at the young age of 42.

Creative Work Analysis: 'Insult' and 'Ten rupees'

His work is a treasure trove of rare insights into human nature. The two short stories that we focused on in the present study were '*Insult*' and '*Ten rupees*'. These stories provide us with the insight into the *feminist* leanings of Manto apart from his struggle for social justice.

Insult is the story of Saugandhi, a self-contained prostitute living in the big city of Bombay. This story was inspired by his Bombay years and had elements of Bombay life such as prostitutes living in overcrowded *chawls*, film actresses and thousands of people crowding the city in their quest to make it big. Saugandhi is portrayed as an independent, fearless woman who lives life by her own rules. A big blow to her high self-esteem is delivered when a rich man refused her services out of disgust. It was also disturbing given that she had never judged anyone wanting to satisfy their sexual needs, yet she was the one being judged and looked at with disgust. Following the rejection, Saugandhi starts questioning the importance of beauty in life. She introspects on the fact as to why the comment of a stranger had such an

impact on her and why is she seeking approval from others. Eventually, she understands that peace comes from within and not from acceptance by anyone else outside of you. There seems to be a parallel here with Manto's personal struggle of thinking highly of oneself yet seeking approval from the world. Manto, otherwise, was also very empathetic towards the plight of women and had female protagonists in many of his stories. Manto's stories are clear reflections of the **objectification of women** in our society.

The other story in focus is 'Ten rupees' where the protagonist of this story is Sarita, a 15 year old girl who is forced into prostitution by her mother due to their poor conditions. Sarita is a sweet, innocent child who has no care in the world. She likes to spend her days playing around with the other kids in locality. Not knowing what is in store for her, Sarita doesn't mind dressing up for the rich men who come to pick her up in long cars as she loves car rides. She loves the carefree feeling of the wind whipping over her face so much that she doesn't give a damn about the men who buy her for a mere sum of ten rupees. She was blissfully free from worry while her innocence and oblivion is still intact. The story revolves around an incident when Sarita is sent off with three men who have bought her for the evening. In her naivety, Sarita ends up having an amazing evening with the men as they laugh, sing songs and have fun ending the ride at the beach. The story is very touching as it shows how depravity can force children to such harsh realities of life which they are too young to understand.

The protagonists of the two stories are very different from each other yet both of them are bound by the common thread of depravity and forced prostitution. Saugandhi is a grown, independent woman consciously in this profession whereas Sarita is a child forced into the trade by her mother. Manto described unique beauty of both women in his writing. All his stories, including this one, Manto voiced that the repression of sexuality by society is at the core of the social evils. Manto's preference for **women-centric** stories also point to the central role women-his mother, sister and wife-played in his life.

Concluding Remarks

The discussion above establishes that Manto's life influenced his work. The characters he created drew inspiration from real-life persons and from his ideological convictions. Yet, one may not say that his madness led to creativity or vice-versa. One may however argue that his sensitivity and emotional vulnerability at one level added to his talent as a writer and at the other level also made him vulnerable to both

alcoholism and depression. His earlier writings have more of reflection of his ideological commitments where the character portrayed are strong and are fighting battles against injustices meted to them in society. His later writings, may be due to his own experience of hopelessness and desolation, portrayed characters that are beaten by circumstances, are hopeless, yet refuse to give-up, just like the unwavering spirit of Manto himself who would just not succumb to victimhood. There is something about Manto's writing and characters that it strikes a chord of the innermost, hidden parts of our self that may have been disowned on account of social compliance and decency. Thus, in our hearts, though Saadat has died, Manto continues to live on.

Case 2: Sylvia Plath

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Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) was a prominent American poet, novelist and short story writer. She was born in Boston, Massachusetts to Otto Emile Plath and Aurelia Plath on October 27, 1932. She received her education from Smith College and later from Newham College, University of Cambridge. She was an achiever throughout her life. She met Ted Hughes, an acclaimed poet himself, whom she later married in 1956. She is best known for two published collections of her poems, *The Colossus and Other Poems* (1960) and *Ariel* (1965), and a semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar* (1963). Plath suffered from severe depression and had suicidal tendencies throughout her adult life. She died on February 11, 1963. Even after 40 years of her death, she continues to attract the readers. Her writings are constantly read, interpreted and understood in order to find a link to her tragic death. In order to explore the link between her mental illness and creativity, parallels were drawn between her life and creative work. Presented here are the major themes that link the experience of madness with creative expression in the life and works of Sylvia Plath:

Bell Jar-An inspiration drawn from self

The Bell Jar (1963) is considered to be a semi-autobiographical account of Plath's life. It is a thinly disguised literary memoir which traces her life

between her freshman year at Smith College in 1951 and her release from the Mclean psychiatric ward following her first suicide attempt in 1953. It narrates the story of a young woman named Esther Greenwood and her subsequent mental breakdown. As Esther's story and descent into mental illness mimics Sylvia's own bouts of depression, she may be considered as a fictional incarnation of Plath. She may be seen as an embodiment of Plath's own fears, ambitions and desires. *The Bell Jar* (1963) contains numerous instances, the inspiration for which was drawn from Plath's own life. Like Plath, Esther is born in a suburban area of Massachusetts, enjoys a glittering academic career both at school and college, does a glamorous internship at a woman's magazine in New York, and aspires to become a successful writer.

Even the characters in the novel are based on people in Plath's life. The character of Philomena Guinea is based on Plath's own patron and author Olive Higgins Prouty, who funded Plath's scholarship to study at Smith College. Dr. Nolan's character is thought to be based on Plath's own therapist, Ruth Beuscher, whom she continued seeing after her release from the hospital. The protagonist's relationship with her family, especially her parents, is also depicted in the same manner as Plath felt about those relationships in her real life. Very similar to Plath's hatred for her mother given that she held her mother responsible for her father's death and her sadness, the protagonist-Esther- also held her mother responsible for her madness. Like Plath, Esther too had lost her father at an early age. *The Bell Jar* (1963) also contains parallels to Plath's romantic relationships with her two lovers. In the novel, Esther breaks her leg while skiing and believes that it is symbolic of her broken relationship with Willard. In real life too, Plath broke her leg upon which she convinced herself that it symbolically stood for the break up with Dick Norton. Dick Norton is widely believed to be an inspiration for the character of Willard in *The Bell Jar* (1963). Even Esther's first sexual encounter seems to be derived from the relationship that Plath had with the biology professor she met during her college days. Due to these overlaps, one may convincingly believe that *The Bell Jar* (1963) is a seminal piece of work which depicts Plath's inner psychological world. She also admitted that for her, writing this novel was a therapeutic experience.

Feminism

Both in her life and in her writings, Plath tried bringing forth the issues related to the oppressive nature of the conventional gender roles and tried to

expose the hypocrisy of the patriarchal structures and resultant mind-sets in the society.

Critique of the Conventional Womanhood

Plath herself and her character Esther, lived in America of 1950s where the society was still heavily patriarchal and the struggle of feminism was in the nascent stages. During her young adulthood, Plath often questioned the American dream's pressures and expectations of getting a house, having a job, and raising children. She believed that a woman ought to make her choices irrespective of the social expectations and gender role impositions. She considered that being a writer was more a part of her identity than being a wife or being a mother. In fact, she found it hard to become a mother till she had established herself as a writer. She feared that childbearing would lessen her compulsion to write. Plath's protagonists as well espoused the similar values in her novels. Esther questions the very idea of womanhood. She tries hard to form an identity of her own in a male dominated world. She feels trapped by the society's expectation that the woman should marry immediately after finishing her education, have children, and become a dutiful wife and a dedicated mother. Esther felt that "*This was a wasted life for a girl with fifteen years of straight A's*" (Plath, 1963, p. 44). She does not want to follow the path of women like Mrs. Willard, who are considered to be an example of an ideal wife, one who is supportive and caring towards her husband, his ambitions, needs and desires. While Esther's mother pushes her towards family life, Esther is driven to be a successful poet and a writer. Thus, just like Plath, the female characters she created live in a constant conflict of realizing their professional dream and living a fulfilling family life and it is impossible to reconcile this conflict without succumbing to the gender norms.

Sexual exploration and expression

Plath consistently pointed out the double standards the society had with respect to sexuality and its expression in both genders. Virginity being a big deal for women, Plath noted that it was unfair that men were allowed to explore their sexuality while women were expected to be chaste till marriage. Plath in fact, freely dated several men and did not cower down to these conventions. She also had the courage to write about her own sexual exploration in her journals. Even her protagonist in *The Bell Jar* (1963) struggles with the idea of sexuality and virginity. She is very keen on losing her virginity before marriage as she insists that she "*could not stand the idea of a woman having a single pure life and a man being able to have a double*

life, one pure and one not” (Plath, 1963, p. 43). Thus she wants to lose her virginity not because of some sexual pleasure, but because she believes that she is entitled to the same sexual experiences as men. In reference to sexual exploration, Esther’s relationship with Buddy Willard is significant as, by being with him, she realises the significance of being sexually liberated. Being with him makes her realise that she could not be married to someone like him for the rest of her life. She would rather explore her true identity on her own. By trying out new things she wants to break free from the shackles of the societal expectations- “I’ll be flying back and forth between one mutually exclusive thing and another for the rest of my days.” (Plath, 1963, p. 49). At the end of the novel, she loses her virginity. She feels relieved at finally relinquishing her virginity and worries surrounding it. Further, by exercising the full control in choosing her sexual partner, she is challenging her own ignorance about sex. For her, relationship is not important, but an impersonal and unconditional sexual experience with no strings attached. It does not matter to her whether her partner is already in a relationship.

Just like Esther’s character, Plath has also had erotic engagements with several men before her marriage to Hughes. Her first significant relationship was with an Estonian artist named Ilo Pill. Her another significant relationship was with a biology professor she met during her college days. Her friend Hunter had noted in her memoir- ‘A Closer Look at Ariel’ (1973)- that though Plath was disciplined, she wanted to have experiences that were out of the ordinary (Steinberg, 2004). She longed to explore her sexuality. But her morality and the society she lived in prevented this, leading to a constant inner conflict. So, through these relationships, Plath wanted to break free from her conventional morality and become sexually liberated.

Experience of Madness

The Bell Jar (1963) narrates the story of protagonist’s journey from a normal girl to a resilient woman, who regresses into madness. This madness may be considered the key which unlocks the answers to her questions about the meaning of her life. As she recovers in a psychiatric ward from her mental illness, she aspires to survive and find meaning in this survival. Esther’s perils with her madness and subsequent treatment are arguably drawn from Plath’s own battle with depression and shock treatment. In fact, some believe that perhaps *The Bell Jar* (1963) was a response to many years of electroshock treatment and the scars it left.

Ideal life versus actual experiences of the world

Plath portrays Esther as an ambitious girl who experiences a gap between the ideal life she aspires for and the real world in which she lives. When Esther gets a job in New York, she is captivated by the urban and luxurious city life. However, she soon comes to harbour dual feelings for the people around her. While she epitomises the freedom and glamour of her job, she is also completely disenchanted with her dreams and their meaninglessness and hollowness. This makes Esther question her worth and lays the foundation for her mental breakdown and suicide attempt later. As it has already been observed that Plath reflected on her own life experiences through *The Bell Jar* (1963). It may be noted that here she drew from her experiences as the guest editor of *Mademoiselle* in New York. Plath was very enthusiastic about getting the job to begin with but she soon became more and more dissatisfied. In the midst of all the glamour accompanying her job, Plath felt a sense of alienation from the place. Being there, she often doubted her abilities as a writer and felt that she was not capable of realizing her dream. These feelings were further exacerbated by two incidents, firstly, on hearing of Rosenberg executions and on being sexually assaulted at a party. Thus, she finished her task in New York as soon as possible to return home. Thus, both Plath and Esther found it difficult to relate to the people around them and felt a gap between their real life experiences and the ideal life they desired.

Feeling Inadequate and Directionless

Esther questions her role as a woman by expressing her desire to die. Perhaps, she seems right from her perspective as she feels the pressure of the restrictions placed on her as a woman. Esther is torn between her writing career and the norm of settling down. Though her intellectual talents bring her many laurels, she is only accepted by her friends when she starts dating a handsome and popular boy. Moreover, her boyfriend Willard thinks that when they will get married, she will drop her poetic ambitions for him. Esther also longs to enjoy sexual freedom by seeking newer experiences. Simultaneously, she suffers from a writer’s block and starts doubting her ability to write. She becomes unsure about what to do after college as her life till now has been centred on doing well academically. Esther feels the anxiety about her future and starts feeling directionless and inadequate due to her indecisiveness. This leads to her madness. At this point, she tries to commit suicide. Again we see a parallel between the novel and Plath’s life. Plath too was very ambitious and often questioned the standard role set for the woman by the society. She was even ready to ditch the domestic life for becoming a

successful writer. During her young adulthood, she often feared that a mother's role will come in her way of becoming an accomplished writer. Therefore, it can be said that Esther exhibits the same fears that Plath had during her own younger days.

Esther portrays the same insecurities that Plath had about herself. She often sought constant external approval due to her lack of confidence in her own abilities, like when she taught at Smith College and became increasingly tensed about her qualifications as a teacher. She had developed a paranoia that she was letting down the people who had recommended her and had shown faith in her. In fact, she wrote a letter to herself, which she called "*Letter to the demon*", in which she addressed the demon which caused her to attempt suicide (Steinberg, 2004). She also found it difficult to accept criticism and rejection, as when she came to know that she was not accepted in Frank O'Connor's short story course (an incident she used in the novel). Already her experience at New York had been too stressful and a disappointment for her. After coming to know about her rejection, she started believing that she had no talent as a writer. This led Plath's first suicide attempt on August 24, 1953, by trying to swallow 48 sleeping pills.

Bell Jar - Symbolism of Madness

The Bell Jar (1963) is an inverted glass jar, generally used to display an object of scientific curiosity. Esther Greenwood compares her mental illness to a bell jar. When she becomes insane, Esther feels herself trapped in an airtight jar which enable her to make a connection between her real world experiences and her perceptions. She feels: "*To the person in the bell jar, blank and stopped as a dead baby, the world itself is the bad dream.*" (Plath, 1963, p. 124). Esther feels paralyzed and sick. The "bell jar" in fact reflects Plath's own inward response to her illness. She, like Esther, was trapped inside herself, and no external stimulation, no matter how new and exciting, could alleviate this condition. The "bell jar" of Sylvia's madness separated her from the people she cared about. Sylvia's association of madness with a bell jar suggests her feelings that madness descended on her without her control or assent. Sylvia's suicidal urges came from this sense of suffocating isolation. As already mentioned, Esther's experience of madness parallels Plath's own suffering from depression. Like her creator, Esther makes numerous attempts to commit suicide. The incident of her last suicide attempt, when she hides herself in the basement of her mother's house and swallows sleeping pills, is directly taken from Plath's life.

At the end of the novel, the bell jar- Esther's madness- is lifted. But she still feels that it may descent again and take a grip of her: "*How did I know that someday—at college, in Europe, somewhere, anywhere—the bell jar, with its stifling distortions, wouldn't descend again?*" (Plath, 1963, p. 126). Though Esther can function more or less normally now, she stills feels terrified about the future. Plath's own life story confirms that the "bell jar" can descend again. Just as the pressures that culminated in her late teens drove Plath to attempt suicide, the pressures that culminated in her early thirties led her to end her life.

Critique of Psychiatry

The novel critiques the profession of psychiatric medicine through Esther's experiences. The critique begins when Esther meets her first psychiatrist, Dr. Gordon, whom she finds very self-satisfied and unsympathetic. He prescribes her a traumatic and painful shock treatment, which worsens her symptoms. Joan, a girl who Esther strongly disliked since her college days, too describes her insensitive treatment at the hands of male psychiatrists. Also, some of the hospitals in which Esther lives, pay more attention to sanitation than to the patients and are frighteningly authoritarian. By seeing the inactive patients, she realizes that mental illness is something defective and to be ashamed of, to be hid and denied, rather than to be cured and discussed.

But when Esther starts receiving treatment from Dr. Nolan, her experiences are rather positive and she even makes a quick recovery. So, the novel does not entirely presents a negative picture of psychiatric care. In fact, Esther's relationship with Dr. Nolan reaches a point where she starts seeing her as her mother. In Freudian psychoanalysis, this reaction to the therapy is called transference, in which the patient attaches her feelings to the therapist which she harbours for a significant person in the past. Esther tries to resolve her feelings for her mother through her transference. She believes her mother is also not able to understand her situation. Although she is very caring, Esther's mother thinks that by deciding not to receive any more shock treatments, Esther will behave more normally. For her, Esther's illness is just a passing phase. But Esther thinks that her own mother has failed her.

Still Esther criticises the shock treatment that she receives from her new psychiatrist. The shock treatment clears her mind entirely like when she completely stops thinking about knives. This comes as a relief, but at the expense of blunting of her sharp

intelligence. This highlights the dubious methods that psychiatrists and psychologists often use to treat their patients. They help the patient clear their mind entirely. But they may not always help the patients to address the underlying important issues that are the root cause of their mental and emotional suffering.

Plath's own psychiatric history and her feelings about her treatment can be traced in this critique. Plath often felt in her later life that the electric shock treatment that she received in her youth had blunted her mind. Also, Esther's relationship with Dr. Nolan parallels Plath's own relationship with Dr. Ruth Beuscher. Plath considered Dr. Beuscher as a mother figure, who took care of her with unusual tenderness. Thus, Plath had also transferred her feelings for her mother onto her therapist. Through her novel Plath openly critiqued the loopholes in modern psychiatric treatment and its eventual impact on the patient.

Concluding Remarks

The link between madness and creativity have been debated over thousands of years. Throughout history, philosophers have speculated on the nature of a 'mad genius', specifically a depressed writer and poet. Whenever the idea of mad genius strikes our mind, we often picture an artist or a scientist shutting himself/herself in a closet and doing his/her creative work. The artist usually has very little contact with the outside world, but his/her inside world finds expression in his/her creative endeavours. The same was also true for Sylvia Plath to a certain extent. As she outpoured her feelings of sadness and isolation in her poems, short stories and the novel *The Bell Jar*, the insights drawn from her case history helps us to unravel the connection between insanity and creativity. If we look at Sylvia Plath's case, her own life story confirms that where madness lies, creativity lurks. The life of Sylvia Plath is that of a female poet who became an icon after tragically committing suicide. The most astonishing aspect of her creativity is that while dealing with severe depression during the last few years of her life, Plath wrote the majority of the Ariel poems, two short pieces "America, America" and "Snow Blitz," as well as her memoir, "Ocean 1212-W." She also wrote her novel *The Bell Jar*. Thus, the lowest point of her life also became her most productive period.

Case 3: Adolf Hitler

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The present study is focused on exploring the link between madness and creativity through the case of Adolf Hitler, one of the most well-known and controversial political leader in recent history. Hitler was born on 20 April 1889 in Austria. He was the leader of the Nazi Party and acted in capacity of chancellor of Germany from 1933 to 1945. He was a notorious dictator who was responsible for the holocaust which took a toll on the lives of 54 million people, most of whom were Jews. He was also responsible for the exile of countless others. As leader of the Nazi party ruling Germany, Hitler was at the center-stage of the World War II in Europe. After his defeat, he shot himself at the age of 56 on 30 April 1945.

A close reading of '*Mein Kampf*' (1971) that translates to 'My Struggle', the autobiography of Hitler, makes it clear that Hitler was a skilled public speaker, propagandist and politician. In just a few years, he not only became the most powerful leader of his country, but he also managed influencing a majority of the German population in the direction of anti-Semitic views. Such is his reputation till date that he needs no introduction. It is also noteworthy that his IQ was 141, which was clearly off-charts. It is significant also because, apart from creativity, a high level of intelligence has also been linked with psychopathology.

The present analysis is based on secondary sources and is derived from the work of psychoanalyst Murray (1943) who prepared a report titled '*Analysis of the personality of Adolf Hitler with predictions of his future behaviour and suggestions for dealing with him now and after Germany's surrender*' for the US Office of Strategic Services. This report was kept confidential for a long time and was only made public years later. This report is believed to be one of the most ground-breaking and coveted documents in history. The analysis is also supplemented by Langer's book titled '*The mind of Adolf Hitler*' (1943). Results of a CATI test by Coolidge et al. (2007) compiled as a report titled '*Understanding madmen: A DSM-IV assessment of Adolf Hitler*' was also looked into for the present analysis. In addition, the present study also refers to Diamond's analysis of Hitler as presented in his book titled '*Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic*' (1996).

Establishing Hitler's psychopathology: Child Abuse and its later influence

Hitler's father was physically abusive towards Hitler and his brother, more so towards Hitler as he was a rebel. He beat Hitler so much by the tender age

of 11 that he "refused to give his father the satisfaction of crying, even after 32 lashes." (Diamond, 1996). Having endured this extent of physical abuse, Hitler harboured tremendous anger and resentment towards his father. He wanted to avenge him for the pain he had caused him and his brother, but, he died by the time Hitler could have his way with his father. It is also interesting to note that "Hitler's hatred for his father fuelled his hatred of Jews, who served as scapegoats for his residual fury" (Diamond, 2014). It is also possible that he developed inferiority complex, narcissism, obsessive-compulsive and paranoid tendencies due to disturbed childhood experiences.

Diamond (2014) remarked that Hitler, "like so many victims of physical or sexual abuse during childhood, may have experienced an extraordinary sense of helplessness and powerlessness as a boy, stemming mainly from his poor relationship with his exceedingly domineering and controlling father. It is frequently this terrifying feeling of total helplessness and powerlessness in childhood that drives what Nietzsche called this exceptional "will to power" later in life." Related literature also suggest that Hitler was frail and sickly during his childhood and was regularly bullied by young Jewish boys about his size (Langer, 1943). Thus, it may be argued that in order to compensate for the deep-seated **inferiority complex** Hitler developed as a child, Hitler had intense need for power which he achieved through success in his political career. However, Hitler was not like other run-of-the-mill power-hungry politics. Hitler was in it for world domination. He concocted the idea of superiority of the "Aryan race" to segregate society into inferior Jews and superior Aryans.

Usually, pathological **narcissism** develops as a defence mechanism against the anxiety caused by a deep-seated inferiority complex. This could have been the case with Hitler too. To compensate for the deep-seated inferiority complex, Hitler put up a front of superiority and self-adulation. Diamond (2014) referred to Murray's explanation of Hitler's adult behaviour as the "counteractive type" i.e. "primarily motivated by resentment and revenge in response to prior narcissistic wounding and profound feelings of inferiority." Adler terms this reactive response as 'masculine protest' which is "compensatory striving for superiority (to counteract feelings of inferiority), aggression, ambition, avarice and envy, coupled with constant defiance, vengeance, and resentment" (Diamond, 2014).

Hitler may have suffered from constant anxiety because of the lack of control as a child enduring abuse and bullying. Diamond (2014) says

that existential anxiety is caused by "being confronted by those terrifying aspects of existence against which we are utterly powerless and cannot control." In order to manage this 'existential anxiety', psycho-analytically positing, Hitler compensated by trying to exert total control over his immediate environment including other people leading to **obsessive-compulsive tendencies**. If this is viewed from the Freudian position, it would seem that Hitler remained arrested at the anal stage of development. Diamond (2014) said that, "Hitler maintained a very close relationship with his personal physician, who helped manage Hitler's anxiety symptoms with numerous medications, many of which were highly unorthodox, and are said to have included both sedating barbiturates and stimulating amphetamine on which Hitler came to depend." Therefore, Hitler suffered from mild substance abuse disorder as well which is frequently acknowledged as a co-morbid condition with obsessive-compulsive personality.

Hitler also had clear paranoid tendencies. Murray (1943) said that Hitler manifested other forms of **somatoform conditions** such as hysterical blindness and mutism. Diamond (2014) mentions that "Hitler is said during adolescence to have developed syphilophobia, a dread of being contaminated by sexual contact with women, leading eventually to sexual impotence according to acquaintances." This was probably a result of his Oedipus complex not being resolved and over-identification with mother instead of father. Over the years, despite being acknowledged as an extremely powerful person, his neurosis persisted. Despite becoming Chancellor of Germany, his **neurosis** manifested as "episodes of "emotional collapse" characterised by violent bouts of furious screaming and crying" (Diamond, 2014). It is due to this reason, Murray diagnosed Hitler with **borderline paranoid schizophrenia** and called him hysterical "megalomaniac."

Dysdiamonic genius and Messiah Complex

Having lost both his parents at a very young age, Hitler was left with no support and had to live in an orphanage in Vienna. Initially, Hitler wanted to become an artist and as a young artist, he survived with a meagre income generated from the sale of paintings. Eventually, he moved to Munich to be with his cousin in order to avoid enlistment in the army. Yet, he was forced to enlist. In 1919, Hitler got a taste of the blood of politics. It was then that Hitler discovered his talent for public speaking at political meetings. By September of 1919, Hitler became an army corporal investigating a group called the German Workers' Party. He was impressed with the group's

anti-Semitic, nationalistic doctrine and signed up for the party. From thereon, Hitler became more popular, being elected in 1921 as the leader of the Nazi party.

As established before, Hitler harboured a lot of resentment and anger which when repressed manifests as "fits of *daimonic possession* in its most negative form' (Diamond, 2014). Diamond (2014) argued that Hitler displayed symptoms of Dysdaimonic genius:

"The dysdaimonic genius manifests a confounding combination of exceptional creative powers coalesced with equally strong tendencies toward psychopathology, perversity, destructiveness, and evil; a providentially rare amalgamation of daimonic power witnessed-in its negative extreme-in devious historical figures like Adolf Hitler. Typically--but not always--these diabolical individuals die at an unusually young age, laid low by their overweening arrogance, hubris, and unholy alliance with evil."

He further takes another example of Osama Bin Laden to substantiate his point. He adds that these individuals "can further be understood as manifesting a "messiah complex". This means that "they become inflated by a grandiose identification with the Messiah archetype present within each of us." Therefore, this identification with a grandiose self-image may cause one to have such extreme narcissism. Such narcissism is coupled with elevated mood which alternates with emotional lows. This point of emotional low, according to Diamond (2014), manifests as episodes of 'emotional collapse' characterized by violent bouts of screaming and crying. This resembles the symptomatology of bipolar disorder, but, such post-hoc diagnosis could be problematic as well.

Conclusion: Hitler-A case of 'malevolent creativity'

In case of Hitler, the madness and creativity came together and manifested as what Diamond (2014) termed as 'malevolent creativity'. In this regard, he said that "it is more important than ever to understand the underlying psychology of such dangerous individuals. Often gifted with the ability to influence and motivate the masses through the power of oration and messianic vision, such leaders, as Murray (1943) observes, become the "incarnation of the crowd's unspoken needs and cravings." This is "much like the mythic figures of the Antichrist in Christianity, Armilus in Judaism, and Masih ad-Dajjal in Islam, they are not merely false prophets, but, even more perniciously, the very embodiment of evil" (Diamond, 2014). Hitler's malevolent creativity allowed him to devise strategies and tactics that

surprised and defeated many of his enemies. He was so dangerously disturbed, yet so creative and gifted that he by his mid-40's commanded such power and had such political standing. His lack of compassion and disregard for ethics enabled him to achieve this tremendous feat. He had no qualms about lying, stealing, torture or murder if he thought they would further his goal. Another phrase that comes close to 'malevolent creativity' is 'mad genius'. Rather, it is this 'mad genius' that made Hitler who he was. If the 'mad' was missing from the 'genius' or if the 'genius' was missing from the 'mad', this extent of destruction would have not happened. Therefore, it may be argued that the confluence of madness and creativity, in case of Hitler, proved to be both potent and decisive.

Case 4: Eminem

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In order to explicate the relation between madness and creativity, the present study attempts to explore the connection between the experience of living through major depressive disorder (MDD) and creative expression in the life and work of Marshall 'Eminem' Bruce Mathers III (hereon referred to as Eminem). Eminem is a fifteen time Grammy award winning rapper, songwriter, record executive, and record producer. Through his career spanning decades, Eminem has been in conflict with the law, media, and his own fraternity. His public image has been of a troubled artist from a difficult background. However, there is more to it than meets the eye as far as his underdog story goes and there is much to be understood of the process of creative expression from his journey.

To understand the lived experiences of MDD, it is pertinent to clarify its clinical picture. Common physical symptoms of major depression include fatigue, low energy, and physical aches. Sleep patterns are generally disturbed and thus, individuals may find it hard to fall asleep (insomnia) or sleep throughout the day (hypersomnia). Similarly, appetite may significantly increase or decrease. Individuals generally feel a lack of interest in pleasurable activities such as sex. Thoughts and movements may slowdown for some people (psychomotor retardation), while others may find it difficult to sit still, and tend to pace, fidget, and wring their hands (psychomotor agitation). Social withdrawal is common in

depression. Individuals may lose connect with their peers and loved ones and prefer to be silent and alone. Cognitively, depressed individuals tend to view the world around them in a very negative light, and find it difficult to be optimistic. Suicidal ideation is also present in depression. There may be organized plans for suicide, or simply persistent thoughts and considerations about suicide. This is termed as 'suicidal ideation'. The phenomenon of suicide contagion has been explored in multiple studies in case of celebrities. Musicians, artists, writers, poets, and others in creative industries often have a lot of influence over the masses and when they attempt or successfully commit suicide, it is soon replicated by the fans. There is now significant evidence to show credibility for the phenomenon, through studies of suicide clusters and suicide 'epidemics.' (Bakwin, 1957; Gould, Kleinman, & Wallenstein, 1994; Brent et al., 1989; Gould, 1990).

Since the present work attempts to explore the life of Eminem through an analysis of his creative work as well as personal accounts of his career and creative process, relevant secondary sources of data were chosen. The personal history of Eminem has been obtained from the media interviews and from his autobiography titled 'The Way I Am.' For the purpose of brevity and to focus the discussion on the parts of his work that directly reflect his experiences with depression and conflicted identity, this paper will only analyse two songs from his vast umbrella of work — 'Beautiful' and 'Rock Bottom.'

About Eminem: A biographical analysis

Disturbed childhood experiences

Eminem was born on October 17, 1972, in St. Joseph, Missouri. He was the only child of Marshall Bruce Mathers Jr. and Deborah Rae Nelson. Reportedly, Bruce moved away from the family to California when Eminem was 6 months old. Debbie Nelson recalls Eminem writing letters to his father as a child. All of them came back marked 'return to sender.' This **absence of a father figure** early in his life made him vulnerable to a range of negative influences.

Eminem moved around a lot in his childhood, primarily staying with family members. He has discussed how this constant relocation prevented his ability to form close bonds with his peers. Further, he was **bullied** extensively at school and in his neighbourhood. This bullying often took the form of physical abuse and violence. At nine years old, he was injured so severely that his brain seemed to be bleeding out of his ear (Mathers, 2008). Several

studies have explored the links between being bullied and childhood or adult depression (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Kumpulainen et. al., 1998; Rantanen et. al., 1999; Salmon, James, & Smith, 1998). It has been suggested that among the consequences of being bullied are anxiety, low self-esteem, feelings of insecurity at school, and resistance to attend school.

Eminem has also recounted being on the 'free meals' list at school. At a young age, this publicly visible marker of depravity 'othered' him and added to his bullying. Apart from other difficult experiences, poverty has often been reported to be "one of the most consistent correlates of depression" (Belle & Doucet, 2003, p. 102). It has also been suggested that due to the vast and multifaceted reach of the impact of poverty, those who grow up in it are predisposed to anxiety and mood disorders (Najman, et. al., 2010). Thus, Eminem's behavioural problems, drug abuse and depression in later years can be linked to his very early experiences of **economic and social deprivation**.

A ray of hope entered Eminem's life when his uncle Ronald 'Ronnie' Nelson, introduced him to the world of rap music. Eminem has described him as a "well-intentioned dude who just couldn't function in society" (Mathers, 2008, p. 135). Eminem has also described the rampant abuse present in Nelson's life — he was the victim of many 'whippings' from his mother's ex-husbands. He also experienced abuse himself. In this regard, he also mentioned, "A lot of people in my family had screws loose because of abuse. If you go back and look at the abuse that I took, it's no surprise I became who I am. Someone I don't really want to be." Eminem admitted the **abuse "twisted him up"** too. Viewing such abuse by and of his close relations may have impacted the mind of a young child and adolescent. Several studies have highlighted how childhood neglect and childhood physical abuse may be indicators and risk factors for future depressed or suicidal adults (Widom, DuMont, & Czaja, 2007; Brown, Cohen, Johnson, & Smailes, 1999; Silverman, Reinherz, & Giaconia, 1996). One may convincingly argue that Marshall's childhood primary experience (as a victim) and secondary experience (as a witness) with abuse may have contributed to him becoming an individual he claims he did not want to be. His negative self-image may be a direct consequence of his abusive childhood experiences.

Nelson was indeed a significant figure in his life, but, the relationship was short-lived as he also committed **suicide** in December 1991. Given that

Eminem sports a tattoo of his name and has many songs that mentions him, one may assume that Eminem deeply valued his presence in his life. This early example of a role model committing suicide could have predisposed him to suicidal ideation in face of his own depression.

Dissociation and internal-split

Eminem's public image may be juxtaposed with Eminem's personal persona. He began his career with his alter ego, Slim Shady, an aggressive 'bad guy' who seemed distinct from both Eminem and Marshall Mathers. Eminem's best friend and colleague Proof described the distinction between Eminem and Slim Shady as, "*Slim Shady is the guy who shows up after a few shots of Bacardi; Eminem is the emcee who goes on stage sober and spits his metaphors. Slim Shady gets drunk and wants to fight*" (Mathers, 2008, p. 34). Thus, Slim Shady persona was perhaps the most reckless and aggressive. Analysis from the previous theme clarifies that this persona emerged from very real experiences in Marshall Mathers' life. The cumulative sense of anger he had felt for a large part of his life was both verbalised through and manifested in Slim Shady. This sense of anger is discussed further in context with Rock Bottom.

It is indeed noteworthy that that these distinct personalities of Eminem, Slim Shady, and Marshall Mathers seemed to coexist in a single individual pointing in the direction of internal-split. We, as outsiders, can only speculate as to the conflicts that may be at the core of such a split. As is usually in the case of a split persona, it is possible that the persona of Slim Shady acted as a safety valve by allowing Mathers to express the anger that he had repressed for years. This may have been a better alternative than repression but it came with its own challenges in terms of drawing the line between Eminem, Slim Shady, and Marshall Mathers. Eminem has described blaming Slim Shady for the things he said or did, in a manner dissociating himself from his anger and recklessness. To him, "*it was great to have someone else to blame. In real life, if you live like that, people call you crazy. Rap is one big Fantasy Island*" (Mathers, 2008, p. 34).

Isolation and Helplessness

The circumstances did not change much even when he grew older. The Detroit neighbourhood where Eminem grew up was one such area dominated by a culture of poverty, where drug use and crime were rampant. His private domicile was burglarised five times — "*Kim and I were always either getting evicted or our house was getting shot up or robbed*"

(Mathers, 2008, p. 144). This acute sense of vulnerability made him take some extreme steps. Eminem obtained a gun to protect himself and his family, but soon, it gave way to more frequent, dangerous and illegal use. It might have given him a sense of control he lacked thus far and he would often shoot in the air behind his recording studio and pull guns on individuals. In sync with the culture of crime and poverty that prevailed where he lived, he would not reckon such use as a crime that might lead to potential jail time (Mathers, 2008). Thus, one may argue that at the heart of all the pent-up anger and resentment, was a sense of deep vulnerability and isolation. He felt powerless and inferior and tried making up for it through his music as well as through various unlawful activities he got involved with. Lewis' (2017) study also emphasised the experiences of isolation, helplessness, and a sense of inferiority that people internalise as part of growing up in culture of poverty.

Rap Music: an escape, an opportunity

This idea of **rap as a land of fantasy** underlines the possible importance of music and rap for a young boy who had grown up in difficult circumstances. The world of rap had the allure of the world of fantasy and may have offered an **escape** as well as an **opportunity to a better future**. It could allow him to escape the poverty and abuse that were characteristic of the Detroit neighbourhood where a young Marshall grew into Eminem and eventually donned the persona of Slim Shady.

Creative Work Analysis: 'Rock Bottom' and 'Beautiful'

Lyrics as an expression of the inner world

The album *Relapse* (2009) was released after a long hiatus period. His last album before *Relapse* was *Encore* (2004). In this gap, Eminem went through some very difficult experiences at a personal level. His re-marriage with Kimberly Ann Scott had fallen apart after eleven weeks. His best friend, Proof had been shot and killed outside a Detroit nightclub. Proof's death was a significant life event that Eminem continued to have trouble dealing with for some time. Proof had been with him and a part of his entourage since before Marshall was Eminem. The two shared a deep bond and Eminem has described the gravity of his loss, "*I have never felt so much pain in my life. It's a pain that is with me to this day. A pain that has become a part of who I am*" (Mathers, 2008, p. 5). Further, Eminem, had relapsed after his time in drug rehabilitation. Remembering this difficult phase, Eminem once said, "*I just went into such a dark place*"

that, with everything, the drugs, my thoughts, everything. And the more drugs I consumed, and it was all depressants I was taking, the more depressed I became, the more self-loathing I became..." (Dawton, 2009). At the professional level as well, Eminem was unsure of his return to the world of hip-hop. Yet, 'Beautiful' was written as a track that would reassure those who felt they were in a dark place that there was a way out. Beautiful may also be considered a track that is a direct reflection of his struggles with depression.

*"I'm just so fuckin' depressed,
I just can't seem to get out this slump
If I could just get over this hump
But I need something to pull me out this dump,"*
(Eminem, 2009)

Here, phrases such as "I'm just so fucking depressed," "I just can't seem to get out of this slump," mirror the inner struggles of Eminem.

Preoccupation with self, absolutist cognitions and pessimism

In the song 'Beautiful,' Eminem has used pronouns referring to his self a total of 85 times. Interestingly, he has also used the word 'you' 42 times. In many cases, even the word 'you' seems to refer to his own self. For instance, "*So don't let 'em say you ain't beautiful...Just stay true to you*" (Eminem, 2009) seems to be addressed to the listeners of the song. However, Eminem is also referring to his struggle with his public image and nay-sayers.

Through his lyrics, Eminem also expressed his belief that he simply can't escape or better the position he is currently in. "Words, phrases, and ideas that denote totality, either of magnitude or probability, are often referred to as absolute." (Al-Mosaiwi & Johnstone, 2018, p. 1). Absolutist words, cognitive rigidity, and deficits in problem-solving ability have been associated with depression (Ellis & Rutherford, 2008). Many therapies for depression are centred around understanding and managing negative thinking (Beck, 1979; Burns, 1989).

Similar sentiments, even more forcefully, are expressed in his song Rock Bottom.

*"That's rock bottom
When this life makes you mad enough to kill
That's rock bottom
When you want somethin' bad enough to steal
That's rock bottom
When you feel like you've had it up to here
'Cause you're mad enough to scream
But you're sad enough to tear"* (Eminem, 1999)

In this verse, even though Eminem uses the word 'you,' he seems to be referring to his own rage at the 'happy people of the world who don't know what it's like to be broke.' Such intensity in the song perhaps is a result of living through extremely difficult times when Eminem was working on this track. He was unemployed and was so economically disadvantaged that he could not even afford diapers for his daughter, Hailie. No wonder that the title and the lyrics of the song are so pessimistic. His inner state of rage and helplessness is reflected when he writes that he possibly is — 'mad enough to scream, sad enough to tear' — but is unable to do so.

Rap as a let out for pent-up anger and resentment

The extreme anger expressed in Rock Bottom may have stemmed from the cumulative experiences of deprivation in formative years and financial struggles that he endured before becoming an established artist. In this regard, he opens up in his book as follows:

"When you grow up like I did — bouncing around, fighting for everything — it does make you angry (...) when I do think back about how many schools I went to and everything else, it makes me realise, no wonder I was so mad at everything. It was almost a way for me piss back in the face of the people who pissed on me all my life." (p. 133)

In his songs, particularly in Rock Bottom, there seems to be a sense of urgency to get back at the world for all the wrong it seems to have done him. The anger and resentment he was surrounded with while growing up, it seems, became an inspiration for his creative angst.

Hitting the 'rock bottom' and suicide ideation

After writing and recording the song Rock Bottom, he "*swallowed a handful of Tylenol 3s*" (Mathers, 2008, p. 28). In fact, he had recorded the song with the intention of it being his very last song. This was followed by Eminem's defeat at The Rap Olympics - "*I was giving up. I had lost. All I kept thinking after that was, what the fuck am I going to do? Because I was going home to nothing*" (Mathers, 2008, p. 29). While his life was otherwise also grim, losing at the Rap Olympics was the loss of a significant opportunity. This defeat seemed final in nature to Eminem, probably to him, there was no turning back from here. This finality seemed to exist to the degree that it erased all hope that he could find in life. He also felt that he was unable to provide for his wife and daughter. He lost at the only thing he was

good at and was pinning his hopes on. In this regard, he noted, “*Rap was always a pipe dream for me, but rap was all I had. Because really, what was I going to do with my life*” (Mathers, 2008). This broke him from within and added to his suicidal ideation. As discussed earlier, the suicide of his uncle and role model Nelson also made him prone to a suicide attempt.

Eminem’s Journey from ‘Rock Bottom’ to ‘Beautiful’

An important difference between Rock Bottom and Beautiful lies in the perspective towards his future. Rock Bottom maintains the same pessimism from beginning to end. The first verse and the last verse are written in the same tone — “*My life is full of empty promises and broken dreams, I’m hopin’ things look up, but there ain’t no job openings.*” (Eminem, 1999)

However, Beautiful ends on a different note, “*Be yourself, man, be proud of who you are, Even if it sounds corny, Don’t ever let no one tell you, you ain’t beautiful.*” (Eminem, 2009) This is also evident of Eminem’s journey as an individual. Rock Bottom was written at the time in his life when he was much younger and unemployed. Beautiful was written about 10 years later when he was one of the most recognised rap artists. While it is true that at both times in his life, he has faced many emotional and familial challenges, but his perspective on life was perhaps less negative in ‘Beautiful’ due to his success and recognition as an artist.

Concluding Remarks

The discussion above establishes clearly that the difficult life experiences that Eminem endured

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predisposed him to depression and suicide ideation. But, the very same depravity and resultant rage and angst gave his rap music a kind of depth that people could relate to. His creative expression not only became an escape from the difficult life he had but also his music gave him a ray of hope for a better life and respect. Eminem’s life and works are, thus, a perfect example of how the life experiences become the underlying thread connecting the ‘madness’ and ‘creative expression’. Fortunately, the suicide attempts of Eminem were not successful and he became a well-known and respected artist. But, there may be many others who are either lost in oblivion or else had their short-lived stint with glory as they could not cope with the psychopathology which led to disastrous consequences. It is, therefore, important for us as a society to work towards creating a culture where mental health issues are not brushed aside as insignificant. We should create programmes for identifying at-risk citizens and provide avenues for seeking help. When it comes to suicidal ideation and suicide contagion, it is imperative to understand when intervention is needed. It is also significant to note here that as a researcher, I believe that understanding the different ways in which people experience and express depression may enhance our understanding of the condition.

On a positive note, one may say that Eminem has come a long way since his early years. On 20th April, 2018, he completed a decade of sobriety. Thus, this paper is dedicated to the continued efforts of those who may find themselves in difficult circumstances but continue to persevere regardless.

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